



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON

APR 12 1994

ADMINISTRATION HEADS, ASSISTANT SECRETARIES, OTHER KEY OFFICIALS, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARIES AND FIELD FACILITY DIRECTORS

Today the Department enters into a historic Labor-Management Partnership Agreement with employee unions at the national level. I am delighted to share the Agreement with you, and look forward to expeditious implementation of its provisions.

The Agreement is an outgrowth of President Clinton's direction to Federal agencies to overcome past adversarial relationships, and to mobilize the creative energies of employees to help achieve the reform objectives of National Performance Review. Partnerships require top level cooperation between Labor and Management. Such cooperation, sharing of information, and predecisional involvement are indispensable ingredients for achieving a better quality of work life for employees, more efficient administration of our programs, and above all better services to veterans.

I want to thank the members of the VA National Partnership Council for producing the Agreement signed today and to heartily encourage the establishment of Local Partnership Councils. This is a great beginning, and I look to leaders at every level of the Department to continue this process. This will help make partnership a success for VA and for veterans.


Jesse Brown

Enclosure

RPC: 6001



Putting Veterans First

VA NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

The Department of Veterans Affairs, American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE), Service Employees International Union (SEIU), National Association of Government Employees (NAGE), and the American Nurses Association (ANA), enter into this partnership agreement in the spirit of Executive Order 12871, Labor-Management Partnerships.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the VA National Partnership Council (NPC) is to design, implement and maintain within the Department of Veterans Affairs a cooperative, constructive working relationship between labor and management to achieve common goals. To that end, the partners will make the investment necessary to establish an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust in accomplishing the Department's mission. This includes open and honest communication with a view toward recognizing and addressing the interests of the partners. This relationship must be established and vigorously maintained nationally and at local field facilities.

OBJECTIVES

In order to achieve this purpose, the partners agree to the following objectives:

1. Improve the day-to-day operations of the Department of Veterans Affairs.
2. Insure implementation of partnership concepts which include:
 - a. Pre-decisional involvement
 - b. Shared responsibility
 - c. Identification of problems
 - d. Sharing of information
 - e. Finding solutions
 - f. Forwarding recommendations to deciding official.
3. Ensure local implementation of partnerships.
4. Develop methods of voluntarily resolving disputes without use of a third party.
5. Identify training needed to accomplish partnership objectives.
6. Follow OPM guidance on implementing Executive Order 12871.
7. Address department policies and procedures which affect employees and customer services.

STRUCTURE/OPERATION

The Council will be comprised of the following *primary members:

Management

Human Resources Management
 General Counsel
 National Cemetery System
 Veterans Health
 Administration
 Veterans Benefits
 Administration

Union

American Federation of
 Government Employees
 American Nurses
 Association
 National Association of
 Government Employees
 National Federation of
 Federal Employees
 Service Employees
 International Union

The intent is to have two (2) members from each union listed above (total 10) and 10 management members.

Co-Chairpersons will be elected, (one from labor and one from management) by the NPC for a term of two (2) years. The responsibility for chairing the Partnership Meeting will be rotated between the Chairpersons.

The meetings will be held quarterly. The Co-Chairpersons may call additional meetings as are necessary. The duration of the meetings will be determined by the agenda items.

The NPC shall establish meeting agendas consisting of subjects agreed to by its members. Agenda items will be received in advance by the Co-Chairpersons.

The meeting place will be in Washington, DC, unless otherwise decided by the Co-Chairpersons.

The NPC may establish committees, task forces, or work groups as appropriate to carry out the work of the council.

It has been determined that travel is in the best interest of the government, accordingly, the Department of Veterans Affairs will be responsible for all Council members' appropriate travel and per diem expenses.

The NPC shall have the right to establish such procedures as are necessary to carry out the functions of the NPC.

*Revised 4/9/96 - Numbers removed by each primary member.

All NPC members will be in a duty status while participating in council business. Local and National Partnership activities beyond or outside normal duty hours of those involved will be considered as official duty and compensated in accordance with the law.

NPC decisions will be made using a consensus approach that integrates the interests of the partners.

Employees are encouraged to participate in partnership activities. Participation in partnership activities shall have no adverse impact on an employee.

IMPLEMENTATION

Joint training for members of the NPC and Local Partnership Councils should be provided as soon as possible. Such training should include:

- o examples of successful partnership experiences in VA and other Federal agencies;
- o interest-based bargaining techniques,
- o alternative dispute resolution approaches; and
- o communication and cooperation skills

Such programs should to the maximum extent possible draw upon the resources of the Federal Labor Relations Authority, the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, the Department of Labor, the Office of Personnel Management as well as VA resources such as the Regional Medical Education Centers (RMECs), Unions and teleconferencing and video capabilities as appropriate. This training will be conducted on a continuous basis to reflect new approaches and to meet the training needs of new employees.

The NPC will develop a procedure to evaluate progress and improvements in organizational performance resulting from the labor-management partnership.

The NPC should provide guidance to facilities on ways to foster local partnerships including specific examples of actions that have been useful such as union membership on facility committees, such as Director staff, Administrative Executive Board, Clinical Executive Board, Strategic Planning, Resources; joint training programs, and work groups to address issues of mutual interest.

At each facility there will be a Facility/Local Partnership Council established. The membership will consist of mutually agreed upon number of members from labor and management. The size, frequency, duration of meetings and agenda items of the council will be mutually agreed upon locally.

COMMUNICATIONS

The NPC shall foster a harmonious atmosphere of communication through the sharing of all information that will affect the relationship of this Partnership. The Co-Chairpersons shall be responsible for the distribution of all correspondence, etc., to all members of the NPC. The Council shall establish an open line of communication that is available to all members of the Council.

Between regular NPC Meetings, Conference Calls will be utilized as an effective means of communication with NPC members who are working on special projects with committees or work groups. The results of these Conference Calls will be reported at the next scheduled NPC meeting.

NPC members have responsibility for notifying the Co-Chairpersons about planned or current initiatives.

Members of the NPC shall have, or have access to, communication tools including P/Cs with modem, Electronic Bulletin Boards, facsimile equipment, FTS, etc.

Minutes will be recorded at each NPC meeting and distributed to each member prior to the regular meeting. Minutes from the prior session will be read and approved at the NPC meetings. All Agreements reached by the NPC shall be distributed to each NPC member for review and comment prior to final signatures.

A National newsletter or publication will be established and distributed to the Local Facilities to provide the status of the progress and accomplishments of VA partnership efforts.

In order to assure an atmosphere of trust, the NPC will encourage that all Facility Directors include the Local Union(s) in Directors Staff meeting and other meetings that affect the relationship of the Facility and the Union.

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The intent of the partners is to reduce the number of formal disputes and the need for third parties in dispute resolution, which will foster a cooperative labor-management relationship.

The partners at all levels will develop plans to implement alternative dispute resolution systems that emphasize and promote the voluntary resolution of conflict based on an interest-based approach. The NPC will provide guidance to this effect. The parties at all levels will identify pending formal disputes, which may include EEO complaints, unfair labor practices, or other matters affecting labor-management or employee relations that are susceptible to resolution and will make a good faith effort to resolve them.

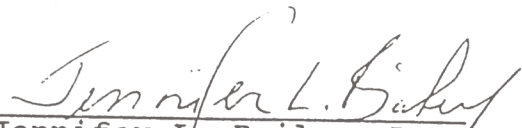
Nothing in this agreement shall preclude the parties from resolving formal disputes at any time.

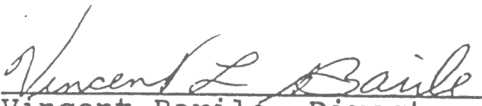
COMMITMENT

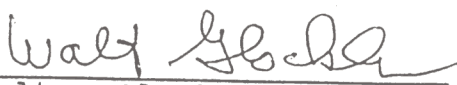
This agreement is a commitment by the partners that all management and union entities within VA make the best efforts to ensure the partnership principles are implemented.


Union:

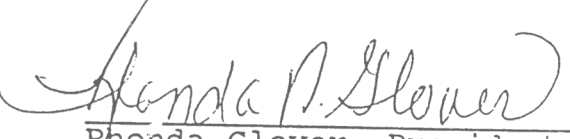
Management:

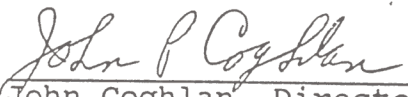

Jennifer L. Bailey, R.N,
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Vincent Barile, Director
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Walter Glockler
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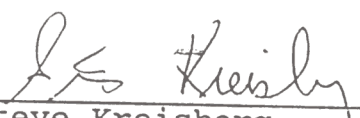

Robert Blair, Director
VAMC, Tuscaloosa, AL



Rhonda Glover, President
SEIU Local 551
VAMC, Indianapolis, IN

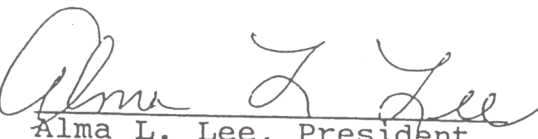

John Coghlan, Director
Personnel Assistance Staff
Veterans Benefits Administration

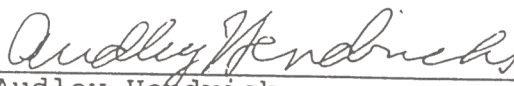

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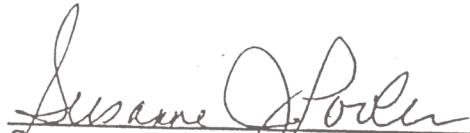

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National Cemetery System


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Professional Council
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David Whatley, Director
VAMC, Hampton, VA


Jesse Brown
Secretary

APR 12 1994

Date